DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 522 SP 032 831

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TITLE Teaching Assessment Workshop Project 30.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Choice; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Inservice Teacher Education; *Minority Group Teachers; *Program Evaluation; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education Programs; *Teacher Recruitment; *Teaching Conditions; Urban Schools; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS University of Northern Colorado

ABSTRACT

A teaching assessment workshop was sponsored by the University of Northern Colorado Department of Sociology and College of Education. The participants were educators from inner city schools, teachers working with at-risk students, and future teachers willing to work with minority students. The goals of the workshop were to: (1) assess strengths and weaknesses in teacher preparation in the areas of curriculum and content, work experience, and general preparation; (2) identify the most serious problems with and impediments to effective teaching; and (3) identify rewards of teaching and the ideal supportive environment. This report summarizes the participants' recommendations and insights, and presents a series of summary statements for each session, with specific quotes from the minority educators. The first session of the workshop was designed to elicit the opinions of minority teachers concerning their preparation for teaching. The second session focused on strategies for attracting minority high school and college students to the teaching profession. The third session proposed suggestions and recommendations for keeping minority teachers in the teaching profession. In the final session, teachers reflected on their own teaching experience, discussing the barriers to effective teaching as well as the intrinsic rewards of teaching. (JD)

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TEACHING ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP
PROJECT 30

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OVERVIEW

During the second year of Project 30, a grant proposal submitted by the Sociology Department and the College of Education was funded. This was one phase of a project designed to gather information helpful in developing a center to attract minority students into the teaching profession. The Department of Sociology and College of Education hosted a three day conference, in June, at Old Man Mountain, near Rocky Mountain National Park. Approximately one dozen educators from inner city schools, teachers working with students at risk, and future teachers willing to work with minority students attended the conference. In addition, two faculty members from the Department of Sociology, one faculty member from the College of Education, and an Assistant Dean from the College of Education attended the workshop. The major goals of the workshop were to:

1. assess strengths and weakness in the preparation of teachers in the areas of curriculum and content, work experiences, and general preparation.

2. identify the most serious problems and impediments to effective teaching.

3. identify rewards of teaching and the most ideal supportive environment.

Opening remarks for the workshop were given by the Provost of the University, and several luminaries in the field of Education visited the workshop to observe activities or make brief, but significant presentations.

Participants in the workshop were asked to address several topics focusing on the teaching profession. Participants would meet in small groups with a member of the University present to observe and record small group discussions. After each small group discussion, all participants would meet together in a large round-table discussion.

A Center for Minority Teacher Recruitment was also proposed as an answer to the emerging teacher shortage, particularly minority teachers. This center would involve recruiting minority students to UNC who plan on entering the educational profession.

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This report will attempt to summarize the recommendations and insights elicited from all participants in the workshop. A series of summary statements for each session, with specific quotes from the minority educators, will be presented. Evaluations of the workshop are included in Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WORKSHOP

1. Repeat the workshop in June 1991.
2. Invite the participants of the June 1990 workshop to act as co-facilitators for 1991 workshop.
3 Develop a bi-annual newsletter to serve as a means of building effective and open channels of communication between our university and school districts.
4. Invite approximately 15 new participants to the workshop in 1991. Priority will be given to minority educators.
5. Invite key faculty and administrators from at UNC who work with minority issues and\or cultural centers to a panel presentation.
6. To have a one day conference for high school students (who have identified teaching as their chosen profession), and their mentor teachers, on our campus.
7. To establish a cooperative program for University faculty to collaborate with educators in comprehensive education. A possible outcome is for K - 12 educators to invite university faculty to visit classrooms.
8. Offer students who have chosen teaching as their profession, a two day orientation on our campus. Students may be paired with a big brother or sister who is near completion of their certification. Priority should be given to minority students.
9. As a reader of the workshop recommendations, please advise us how to receive future financial support to implement these recommendations.

SESSION 1

EVALUATING TEACHER PREPARATION

The first session of the workshop was designed to elicit the opinions of minority teachers concerning their preparation for teaching. To begin the session, each teacher was asked to describe the courses which they considered to be the most valuable in their undergraduate teacher preparation. The teachers were unanimous in their view that student teaching was most important. In fact, their recommendation was for the University to consider two student teaching experiences. Students should have two student teaching experiences from the following three types of schools, an urban setting, a suburban setting, or a rural teaching experience. Follow-up questions suggests these are needed to enhanced the prospective teachers awareness of cultural diversity. The most critical training for prospective teachers is to develop skills in classroom management. The following quote emphasizes the importance of learning classroom management skills. A high school

math teacher said, "Teachers don't make it because they don't know their content - they don't make it because they can't handle their classroom."

Other courses described as most valuable were courses which focused on pedagogical style, For example, courses that enhanced the teacher's confidence and maturity, taught listening skills and the importance of "wait time," and demonstrated the importance of developing a caring situation were stressed. Specific content courses, or subject matter, were not mentioned concerning this topic.

Some of the conclusions of the observers were; there was virtually no discussion of course content or subject matter. All concerns were focused on how to be better teachers regardless of subject matter taught. Their concerns centered on how to cope with teaching problems, for example, crisis management, classroom management, behavioral problems, and coping with referring students for administrative discipline. Another quote, this one from a middle school teacher, sums up their concerns. "(Teachers) may know (their) content area but (they) are unable to transmit that content to students." Apparently, these minority teachers do not feel that having enough content is the problem with teaching in schools characterized by high minority enrollments.

During the same session, the teachers were asked to design a course for teacher preparation, describe the content of this course and explain the rationale for including the specific content for this course. Once again, there was a great deal of unanimity among all of the small groups. There must be more courses dealing with cultural diversity and cultural awareness. The need for more courses with an emphasis on minorities and inequality should be part of undergraduate education for teachers. Also, there should be courses where prospective teachers can learn self esteem, assertiveness training, classroom management, how to deal with administrators, (especially when there is high turnover among administrators in minority schools). Also, participants indicated there should be more courses where they can experience different teaching styles. For example, there is a need to be aware of reflective teaching styles, the value of tutorial work, and cooperative learning. Another middle school teacher said, "(you) need to know your own (learning style) and to teach to different styles."

Also during this session, the workshop participants were asked to describe the most valuable courses they have had in their graduate education. In this area, there was consensus that important courses stressed pluralism and cultural awareness, school law, and special education. Concerning the special education class and school law class, the participants stressed the importance of "learning how to diffuse a potentially dangerous situation."

When asked to design a graduate seminar for professional educators and describe the content of this seminar, cultural pluralism, cultural diversity and cultural awareness were emphasized by every group. In addition, a course in societal changes, to enhance the ability to adjust teaching styles to daily situations was emphasized. Advanced study in the subject matter was also mentioned with equal frequency. In addition to courses in cultural awareness and various subject matter, courses focusing on the teaching profession were discussed at length. For example, one elementary school teacher stated, "teachers need to be taught how to mentor other teachers." Perhaps a course where prospective student teachers meet with mentor teachers before the student teachers go into the field.

The workshop participants did not feel that national board certification would lead to better teachers. Another quote from a high school teacher answered this question succinctly. "We don't want just subject area specialists teaching students - just because we know our content doesn't always mean we can teach it."

SESSION 2
SUGGESTIONS FOR ATTRACTING MINORITY TEACHERS

The second session of the workshop focused on strategies for attracting minority high school and college students to the teaching profession. Small group discussion centered on developing strategies for encouraging high school students, and college students, to enter the teaching profession. Following small group task development, each small group presented their work to the entire group.

Each workshop participant was asked, what can universities do for high school students to encourage them to enter the teaching profession? The first recommendation stressed the "need to look for quality, whether students be minority or majority." One middle school teacher said, "Need high incentives - financial and other - summer programs - longer than just one day, faculty members (need to) come to schools to share time and experiences with students - start with middle school." Another teacher said, "Large groups come to the University - as an excursion - never too early to begin interaction and recruitment - plant the seed at middle school - career awareness needs to happen at the elementary school." There was a general consensus that college faculty should visit schools with a high proportion of minority students and interact with the students.

The workshop participants were also asked, what can teachers do to encourage students to enter the teaching profession? Most of the responses centered on strategies teachers can use in the classroom. For example, Allow students to be "teacher for a day,"

with teacher like responsibilities. Teachers need to be good role models. However, one important suggestions stressing the relationship between teachers and the university was "Universities need to have collaborative relationships with high schools and high school teachers."

What can be done for college students to encourage them to enter the teaching profession? Participants recommended education fairs, interaction with college professors who will encourage students to enter the teaching profession, and "give students the flexibility to change their curriculum - the flexibility to change their minds." Follow-up questions indicated the teachers at the workshop thought the teacher preparation curriculum was far to structured, and was not necessarily focused on what makes a good teacher. Another recommendation was the development of partnerships. There is a need to enable students to work in schools even though they may not be interested in teaching.

During this session, the workshop participants were also asked what recommendations they would make for preparing minority teachers in the future. How should instruction be changed? How can the student teaching experience be enhanced or improved? Their recommendations can be summarized as follows. Remedial programs need to be provided for students that have a need. Once they are on track, our expectations need to be as high for minority students as they are for everyone else. Students need to be aware of prejudice and how to deal with it. Minority teachers are often scrutinized much more carefully than other teachers.

Are there community strategies that can be developed to encourage minorities to enter the teaching profession? Schools need business partnerships - grants and/or scholarships. Just as businesses provide grants and scholarships for those entering the business profession, it is important for businesses to provide grants and scholarships for students going into teaching. "It is in their best interest." Another recommendation was for after school programs to be manned (sic) by community members - "gets them into the schools and lets them see the problems."

The participants were also asked, what type of support systems should be developed in high schools and colleges and universities to assist students entering the profession of education? Recommendations included the development of future teacher clubs, parent programs, and networking with minority organizations. For example, networking with Black United Way, Hispanic educational organizations, and minority owned businesses. Recommendations for universities included having university cultural centers develop closer ties with faculty to discuss mentoring, and special aspects of various educational programs. Also, the workshop participants recommended having the university adopt a high school or middle

school and orienting the school members toward the university and programs and services available.

SESSION 3
SUGGESTIONS FOR KEEPING MINORITY TEACHERS

Session three focused on suggestions and recommendations for keeping minority teachers in the teaching profession. Small group discussion centered on developing strategies for keeping current minority teachers in the teaching profession. Following small group discussion, each small group presented their strategies to the entire group. Workshop participants were first asked to respond to the question; how can working conditions in schools be improved to enhance the probability of current minority teachers staying in the teaching profession? Participants overwhelmingly indicated that working conditions must be enhanced to keep minority teachers. Site based management was frequently mentioned as a mechanism for improving teaching at all levels and with all teachers. Of course, the notion that salaries needed to be raised was mentioned with as much frequency. Interestingly, an equally important statement was, "There is a need for support groups to cope and solve problems instead of running." Teachers need to support each other with problems in teaching, but also to provide support when a teacher has personal problems. A middle school teacher indicated, "There is a need for a nurturing faculty." Finally, concerning this topic, teachers felt there was a need for hard research data on issues related to instruction (e.g., class size).

The teachers were also asked, "what factors attracted you to the teaching profession? The vast majority indicated that they were attracted to teaching by a teacher who took a special interest in them. They also indicated that they liked students, liked to teach, and got positive support from others who were going into teaching.

Workshop participants were also asked, what specific problems do teachers encounter that is most likely to cause teachers to seek other kinds of employment? Again, almost unanimously, the teachers indicated frustration as the most likely problem to cause them to leave teaching. They indicated this was frequently caused by lack of support due to a "top - down" management style. As administration changes in the school building, priorities change. They also noted a high transient rate among administrators in minority schools. The teachers indicated this caused a lack of consistency in the school and the lack of an administrative support team for teachers. They also indicated, a lot of teachers who leave the teaching profession, shouldn't be teaching in the first place.

SESSION 4
EVALUATING TEACHING EXPERIENCE

This session was designed to elicit the opinions of teachers concerning their teaching experience. Small group discussion focused on identifying factors that lead to a satisfying or unsatisfying teaching career. Once again, after the small group discussion, each group presented their ideas to the entire group for discussion. The first topic for discussion during this session was to identify the most serious problems encountered as a teacher. A middle school teacher summed up their first concern. "Uncertainty - do you have a job, where will that job be, no guarantee that you will have a position." A special education teacher remarked, "(There is a) lack of support from the special ed office as well as finding materials for a wide academic range of students." Not only is there uncertainty about a teaching position, there is uncertainty about teaching materials. An elementary school teacher again indicated, "Higher administration changes and their pet projects change as the administration changes - leads to teacher apathy toward new ideas." Also the teachers indicated that there was a high degree of teacher mobility, especially first year teachers. Beginning minority teachers perceive more scrutiny than their white counterparts. In addition to high teacher mobility, there is a "high degree of mobility of students - students do not have to buy into the school." Interestingly, the last item mentioned by these teachers was assaults on teacher, gangs, emotional students, and teachers being afraid to break up fights. While this was seen as a problem, it was not a truly significant factor for most of the teachers participating in the workshop.

When asked to identify the rewards of teaching, almost all of the teachers indicated the gratitude of former students. For the workshop participants, the opportunity to affect student lives, and making a positive influence in the lives of children was the most important reward of teaching. "Teaching is fun."

Workshop participants were also asked to identify school, community, and interpersonal barriers to effective teaching. Many responses to this item were a repeat of the first item discussed during this session. One mentioned frequently however was the lack of parental support and communication with the parents. A high school math teacher indicated how especially difficult it was to contact the parents of high school students. Again, the lack of site based management was indicated as a major barrier to effective teaching. "Teacher need to have the autonomy to do what they need to do in their classroom - teacher need to feel empowered." The emphasis on testing and measurement limits a teachers ability to be creative and effective.

Why would you leave the teaching profession? The workshop participants were not interested in leaving the teaching

profession. They indicated, "look what teachers do in their off times - usually school related activities." They indicated they would not leave unless they were too sick, or if they died. However, they also expressed that they didn't perceive that their efforts were appreciated.

The workshop participants were also asked, what working conditions caused them the most problems in teaching. Most indicated the physical state of the school building. For example, they were concerned about roaches, old heating systems, and buildings not maintained. To repeat an earlier comment, they were frustrated with new administrations and new themes.

Also, during this session, the teachers were asked to identify what are the characteristics of an educated person. What do you, as a teacher, have to do to teach these characteristics? Their responses included first, an understanding of other types of cultures and other people. Also, there needs to be an awareness of what one doesn't know, "the arrogance of ignorance."

During this session, the teachers were asked, what do you think society expects of the schools. Without dissent, their response was "Child care, a baby sitting service."

One of the possible outcomes of this workshop is the development of a network with all of the participants. Current plans call for scheduling an all day conference during the second week (tentative) of November. Participants plan on attending this conference and bringing additional minority teachers. Participants from the workshop would like a discussion of financial aids, cultural support groups, and what can minority teachers do to help recruitment. In the closing remarks, faculty members expressed their appreciation of all group participants. One participant expressed the sentiments of all by singing, "That's What Friends Are For."

SUMMARY

The Teaching Assessment Workshop met at Old Man Mountain during June of 1990. At this workshop, the participants broke up into small groups to discuss specific topics. After each small group discussion, the participants met in a large roundtable discussion group. One of the first topics of discussion was Teacher Preparation. The consensus of the group was that student teaching experiences were critical. In their opinion, content knowledge was sufficient, what was needed was cultural awareness and teaching skills. The teachers were overwhelmingly supportive of additional course work in cultural diversity, minority awareness, and courses focusing on inequality.

A second major focus of the workshop was in the area of attracting minorities to the teaching profession. Their primary

concern was first to develop quality teachers, followed by the need to meet with students who have indicated their desire to pursue a teaching career. They also suggested meeting with minority students in middle schools. It was felt that recruiting students to the teaching profession would be most successful during their middle school experience.

Keeping minority teachers in the profession was the third major topic of the workshop. While salary and other financial concerns were mentioned, the primary concern of the participants focused on working conditions. When working conditions were pleasant, teachers were more likely to stay in the profession.

Evaluating teaching experiences was also addressed at the workshop. The most frequent criticism was a criticism of administration activities. These criticisms included a lack of support, lack of material, poor working conditions, high degree of mobility for first year teachers, and an insensitivity to first year minority teachers.

Overall, the participants evaluated the workshop as a tremendous success. All of the teachers showed a desire to have the workshop continue next year, and possibly include minority students for one day. Plans are to seek additional university support to continue this relationship begun with minority teachers throughout the state.